

By ~~News~~ Editor, Software Reviews

## To "Google" or to "Yahoo!"

### *Searching with Google or Yahoo!*

For some time now, searching for information on the web is called "googling". The action specified for the term is literal as when you google for something you practically launch Google and look for pages providing the necessary results. When it comes to search engines and web searching, the Mountain View giant is on its way to monopoly, with only one obstacle on the road: Yahoo! It's true that it is quite far behind if we take a look at the statistics: out of about 61 billion searches in August this year, 8,549 of them used the Yahoo! search engine while Google was employed in 37,094 billion times. The figures are amazing, as Google seems to have taken more than half of the worldwide market. I am not even going to bring Microsoft's Live Search into the matter as they know they have big problems with it (and yet it came fourth in the top after Baidu with 2,166 searches). But what is the difference between them? What does Google have and Yahoo doesn't? From where I stand, there is a thin line between them concerning the returned results. But Google somehow manages to look down on Yahoo all the time. Actually, if I think better, Yahoo! has a slight advantage as it helps the user choose the right search query. With parsing through billions of web pages in split seconds when returning a result, both search engines are fast, no question about it. Our tests could not determine which one was faster and that doesn't even matter, since the differences were between 0.03 and 0.13 seconds. So speed is not relevant in the comparison. Some may determine which one is the best by comparing the number of returned results. Could be a criteria if you ever bother to view beyond the third or fourth page of results (that is 40 results by default in both engines). I never saw someone go beyond the second or third page except out of curiosity. All relevant links are displayed at the beginning and as you turn the pages, chances to find the desired info are dramatically slim. Indeed, there may be a slight connection to the term in the query, but most of the times it is limited to the term, and it may not be what you need. Returned result relevance is the battle ground of search engines on the market. The better returned results you get, the faster you do your job. And even if both return the most relevant results, statistics clearly show the general public's preference bent towards Google. A few elementary tests will demonstrate the accuracy of the results displayed by these two search engines and will probably make you think again before "googling" for something, or not. Typing "moon" in Google's search box returned no less than 175,000,000 results in 0.05 seconds (the number of the results may have increased in the past few hours, as Internet pages keep showing up and disappearing faster than Chris Angel). I know it's impressive, but most definitely any user doing this will stop collecting information further than the 10th link. We stopped at the first six results provided by Google. First off, we are shown images of Earth's single natural satellite (courtesy of Google Images), but that is just for showing off Google's capabilities (and yet very handy in other cases). The first link offered by world's number one search engine is from Google Moon which presents "a photographic map of the equatorial region with pan and zoom capability, showing locations of the Apollo landings". Not too bad, as you can zoom in and out at will and the additional information comprises data on the different Apollo landings and findings as well as astronauts' discoveries and personal opinions. Wikipedia's relevance comes in as a second result and we all know the richness of the entire database. Third and fourth links are from [nineplanets.org](http://nineplanets.org) and [solarviews.com](http://solarviews.com), bringing details equal in importance to those on Wikipedia. Up until now, all links are valid offering various information on the Moon and its influence on the life on Earth. But the fifth one has nothing to do with my search, as it is all about travel planning and guides, on Earth ([Moon Publications](#)). Now you tell me, if I wanted a travel guide for a trip in some exotic place, on Earth, from a company having "moon" in its title, wouldn't I have typed in a more specific query? The next two results are also relevant to my term of search presenting valuable information on moon phases and lunar features. The conclusion is that googling "moon" provided me with plenty of results (sure, we analyzed only the first six of them because of the specificity of the query) that satisfied my need for information regarding the Moon. But I expected a full 6 out of 6 relevance in the case of Google. Yahoo! search engine is definitely not as popular as Google, but it has its share of advantages. The search assistant, for instance, helps you choose more specific queries for more relevant results. Regular users have to do nothing in order to look for information

like a professional librarian. The same term was looked up in Yahoo! Search. An amazing number of 291,000,00 results was returned in a whopping 0.03 seconds. Notice the increased number of links provided? Size does not matter too much in our case study. Just like Google, the first set of items displayed by Yahoo! Search are image results. Not as good as the competition's, but hey, I was not looking for pictures of the satellite, but black on white information. The result list of six is just amazing. Not only did I find all the information I needed from reliable sources, but it scored a 6 out of 6 on relevance scale. [Nineplanets.org](http://Nineplanets.org) and [solarviews.com](http://solarviews.com) are the first two returned results while the third feeds us information on the phases of the moon and a lookup for any year starting with 1700 and ending with 2035 (from U.S. Naval Observatory's Astronomical Applications Department). Space.com comes in fourth presenting information on upcoming lunar eclipses, description of lunar phases, photo galleries, a top 10 coolest moon facts and more. I hope you are not surprised about Google Moon not being in the first links as it falls on fifth place in Yahoo!'s results while the last place is occupied by a website providing details on lunar missions. Scrolling down the page will show nothing but relevant results. During the test, I set the page to display 20 results instead of the default 10 and though Yahoo!'s search is less popular, it showed only relevant results, while Google rated 18 out of 20. A very important feature of Yahoo! is that it displays related searches both at the top of the page and at the bottom. With Google, these are shown only at the bottom of the screen. Also, the search assistant in Yahoo! will try to help make your query more specific. There is no question that the results in both search engines will offer all necessary information, but it seems that Google slips some less relevant results right on the first page. Plus in Yahoo! the built-in search assistant will show you more specific queries and you can choose from for more accurate results. As for the intense use of Google, I guess it all comes down to marketing and psychology. I for one have always associated Google with web searching and Yahoo! with instant messaging. Why? Because Google rose as a much better alternative to all web search tools on the market and Yahoo! did the same thing with instant messaging. Think of the number of people employing GTalk and the market share of Yahoo! Messenger. Marketing also contributed to the increase of market share for both companies, but it seems that Google did a better job at promoting the search engine. However, do not ignore Yahoo! Search as if Google does not take measures towards improving the search and usability of the search engine, it will soon become a shooting star.